

Fond of Noise.

It is not always easy to tell why woodpeckers select one tree rather than others of the same kind in the forest to begin their operations upon, or why they attack one side of a tree and leave the other untouched. Commonly it will be found, no doubt, that worms or ants are concealed beneath the point selected, and that the wood-pecker is guided in his search by the sense of hearing.

But there are circumstances which go to show that the woodpecker is not always searching for food or guided by sound. In the winter, when worms and ants are dormant and silent, he will wake every echo for a long distance around by tapping on a dead, dry branch, or on the hollow trunk of a tree. He does not then apply his ear to the bark to listen for the noise of the worms beneath, but his object seems to be to make all the noise he can himself.

The yellow hammer, or golden winged woodpecker, is most easily studied, because he is most fearless and most nearly domestic in his habits. When hollow trunks of trees are easily found, he usually confines his attention to them; but in prairie regions he bores holes through hollow pillars, steeples of churches, and other structures which promise an opening into an interior.

But there must be some other motives at times, for the writer has watched one of these birds working with unusual racket upon one side of an oak board, where by moving six inches he was at perfect liberty to look over upon the other side of the board and investigate whatever he could be hoping to reach by boring a hole through it. Indeed, it was perfectly immaterial upon which side of it he should begin operations.

One year the writer occupied a house which had large, hollow pillars in front. Some smooth, round holes in them, about two inches in diameter, indicated what freedom the yellow hammers had used and would use again. In the early spring they began operations, and it was impossible to sleep in that house after daybreak.

The birds would not have been harmed for this, even if it had become necessary to remove the house and pitch a tent on the spot; but some experimenting was done at their expense.

It was plain that noise was what they cared most for, as they would bore a hole within a few inches of one which was already formed, and which would answer every possible purpose as well as the new one. To try them on this point, a small, empty cask, probably a nail cask, was set bottom upwards on a carpenter's bench in front of the house.

The yellow hammers could make no progress if their intention was to perforate the staves, but they could get out of the empty cask a wonderful volume of noise. They quitted work on the pillars at once, but the joke of the thing became apparent when it was found that, whereas they had disturbed one household, they now woke up the whole town.—Youth's Companion.

Shut In.

Artists and men of letters sometimes insist upon doing their work under peculiar conditions, which people of other occupations often look upon as quite foolish and unnecessary. No doubt there is something to be said on both sides. Some writers, like Scott and Trollope, have been as methodical as any bookkeeper or mechanic. But, in general, if a man is to do his best at any kind of creative work, he must be surrounded by favorable conditions. When Emerson had a lecture to finish, he was accustomed to go to Boston and take a room at a hotel, where he could be secure against interruption. But men are often more in danger from their own laziness or fickleness than from any outside intrusion.

The French painter, Gericault, had an abundant head of hair, of which he was very proud. Being extremely desirous of finishing his picture, "The Wreck of the Medusa," he had his head shaved completely smooth, and, by the time the hair was grown again, his great picture was done.

"I never should have painted it," he said, "if I had not cut off my hair. I was seriously tempted, again and again, to throw away my brushes and rush out; but, disfigured as I was, I didn't dare."

Soirtot, the sculptor of a statue of the Republic which stands in front of the French institute in Paris, found it necessary to complete this work without intermission except for the most necessary rest. Being mechanically ingenious, he devised a sort of clock work which upset a glass of water upon his face after a certain time had gone by.

Victor Hugo, in writing "Notre Dame de Paris," had all his ordinary clothes taken from his house, and dressed himself in garments so fantastic that he dared not leave his room in them.

The painter Ziem, another Parisian, had himself locked in his studio while engaged upon a certain work, and counted the key to a man whom he could trust, and who was under orders not to unlock the doors, even if the painter himself should command him, in the sternest manner, to do so. A hole was cut in the door, and, through it, one day, food was passed.

Ziem worked on in this way through the compact of 1851, when Louis Napoleon usurped the government, and the most stirring events were taking place. The painter knew nothing about them. He had left orders that no letter nor paper should be given him.

His picture finished at last, he came out of his long captivity to find that France had passed from a republic into a monarchy.—Youth's Companion.

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